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THE AUGUSTAN BOOKS OF
ENGLISH POETRY

SECOND SERIES NUMBER SEVEN

ARTHUR WALEY

(POEMS FROM THE CHINESE)

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The Augustan Books of English Poetry

(*Second Series*)

Edited by Humbert Wolfe

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These are called "Poems from the Chinese," and we have Mr. Waley's assurance that there are in existence Oriental originals. But if it be so (and, of course, it is), then we have here a literary miracle. It is a platitude that translation of poetry is either bad verse or bad translation. But Mr. Waley, translating not merely from one language into another, but almost from one planet into another, has produced a body of living poetry, in which there is every reason to believe he re-creates, without distorting, the Chinese poets.

This is an unparalleled feat. But as we are, with about six exceptions in the whole of Great Britain, incapable of comparing the English and the Chinese, we must address ourselves to these poems as though they had been written by an Englishman of the twentieth century, and judge them on that basis. It is a severe test to apply to translations, but Mr. Waley emerges from it serenely victorious. Indeed, serenity is the keynote of all this work—the serenity of assured mastery in a difficult medium, but still more of outlook. The beauty with which these poems are inlaid is fundamentally a wise beauty, and the wisdom is as much in the shape of Mr. Waley's mind as in that of China. There is no need to hurry here. Wisdom goes at an even pace, and has time between her penetrations of the stars to observe the smallest things of life. Her leisurely glance sweeps over them with patient gold, and they settle, almost without a sigh, into decoration and into pattern. We have lost (and the Chinese have lost) the secret of their enamels of the great periods. But Mr. Waley has private access to them, and his poems, varnished with just that cool and even certainty of paint and texture, achieve one final translation—the translation of colour into speech.

HUMBERT WOLFE.

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From the "Book of Odes"

ANON. (*c.* 1000 B.C.)

AS a boat is danced
Where the waves will,
So I on my bed
In torment tossed
Lie long awake;
Nor wine, nor sport
Can ease my pain.

Oh that my heart were a glass
Wherein I might read!
To my brothers I went,
Sought help and found it not,
But anger only.

My heart is not a stone,
To be rolled aside;
My heart is not a mat,
To be folded away.
What have I done? If I a jot have erred,
Show me my fault!

My heart is dull with dread;
I am girt around
With the scorn of little men.
Much torment have I seen,
Much insolence endured,
Have sunk in idle thought
And, waking, beat my breast.

O Sun, O Moon,
Why have you dwindled and changed? . . .
Sorrow to my heart

Clings like an unwashed dress;
I am borne down
By useless thoughts, and cannot
Take wing to fly away.

Odes, I., 3, i.

From the "Book of Odes"

ANON. (*c.* 1000 B.C.)

ALL day the wind blew wild.
You looked at me and laughed;
But your jest was lewdness and your laughter mockery.
Sick was my heart within.

All day the wind blew with a whirl of dust.
Kindly you seemed to come,
Came not, nor went away.
Long, long I think of you.

The dark wind will not suffer
Clean skies to close the day.
Cloud trails on cloud. Oh, cruel thoughts!
I lie awake and moan.

The sky is black with clouds;
The far-off thunder rolls;
I have woken and cannot sleep, for the thought of you
Fills all my heart with woe.

Odes, I., 3, v.

From the "Book of Odes"

ANON. (*c.* 1000 B.C.)

THERE grows an elm-tree on the hill,
And by the mere an alder-tree—
You have a coat, but do not wear it,
You have a gown, but do not trail it,
You have a horse, but do not ride it,
A coach, but do not drive it,
So will it be till you are dead
And others can enjoy them!
There grows a gum-tree on the hill,
And by the mere a chestnut-tree.
You have wine and food, why do you forget
Sometimes to play your lute,
Sometimes to laugh and sing,
Sometimes to steal new playtime from the night?
Shall it be so till you are dead
And others have your house?

Odes, I, 10, ii.

Cock-Crow Song

ANON. (1st cent. B.C.)

IN the eastern quarter dawn breaks, the stars flicker pale.
The morning cock at Ju-nan mounts the wall and crows.
The songs are over, the clock[1] run down, but still the feast is set.
The moon grows dim and the stars are few; morning has come to the world.
At a thousand gates and ten thousand doors the fish-shaped keys turn.
Round the Palace and up by the Castle, the crows and magpies are flying.

[1] A water-clock.

Meeting in the Road

ANON. (1st cent. B.C.)

IN a narrow road where there was not room to pass
My carriage met the carriage of a young man.
And while his axle was touching my axle
In the narrow road I asked him where he lived.
"The place where I live is easy enough to find,
Easy to find and difficult to forget.
The gates of my house are built of yellow gold,
The hall of my house is paved with white jade,
On the hall table flagons of wine are set,
I have summoned to serve me dancers of Han-tan.[1]
In the midst of the courtyard grows a cassia-tree,—
And candles on its branches flaring away in the night."

On the Death of his Mistress

BY THE EMPEROR WU-TI (157-87 B.C.)

THE sound of her silk skirt has stopped.
On the marble pavement dust grows.
Her empty room is cold and still.
Fallen leaves are piled against the doors.
Longing for that lovely lady,
How can I bring my aching heart to rest?

[1] Capital of the Kingdom of Chao, where the people were famous for their beauty.

The Lychee-Tree

By Wang I (*c.* A.D. 120)

SOMBRE as the heavens when morning clouds arise,
Bushy as a great broom held across the sky,
Vast as the spaces of a lofty house,
Deep fretted as a line of stony hills.
Long branches twining,
Green leaves clustering,
And all a-glimmer like a mist that lightly lies
Across the morning sun;
All spangled, darted with fire like a sky
Of populous stars.
Shell like a fisherman's red net;
Fruit white and lustrous as a pearl, . . .
Lambent as the jewel of Ho, more strange
Than the saffron-stone of Wu.
Now sigh we at the beauty of its show,
Now triumph in its taste.
Sweet juices lie in the mouth;
Soft scents invade the mind.
All flavours here are joined, yet none is master;
A hundred diverse tastes
Blend in such harmony no man can say
That one outstrips the rest. Sovereign of sweets,
Peerless, pre-eminent fruit, who dwellest apart
In noble solitude!

The Wangsun[1]

By Wang Yen-shou, son of Wang I (*c.* A.D. 130)

SUBLIME was he, stupendous in invention,
Who planned the miracles of earth and sky.
Wondrous the power that charged
Small things with secret beauty, moving in them all.
See now the wangsun, crafty creature, mean of size,
Uncouth of form; the wrinkled face
Of an aged man; the body of a little child.
See how in turn he blinks and blenches with an air
Pathetically puzzled, dimly gazes
Under tired lids, through languid lashes
Looks tragic and hollow-eyed, rumples his brow,
Scatters this way and that
An insolent, astonished glare;
Sniffs and snorts, snuffs and sneezes,
Snicks and cocks his knowing little ears!
Now like a dotard mouths and chews;
Or hoots and hisses through his pouted lips;
Shows gnashing teeth, grates and grinds ill-temperedly,
Gobbles and puffs and scolds.
And every now and then,
Down to his belly, from the larder that he keeps
In either cheek, he sends
Little consignments lowered cautiously.
Sometimes he squats
Like a puppy on its haunches, or hare-like humps
An arching back;
Smirks and wheedles with ingratiating sweetness;
Or suddenly takes to whining, surly snarling;
Then, like a ravening tiger, roars.

He lives in thick forests, deep among the hills,
Or houses in the clefts of sharp, precipitous rocks.

[1] A kind of small, tailless ape (?).

Alert and agile is his nature, nimble are his wits;
Swift are his contortions,
Apt to every need,
Whether he climb tall tree-stems of a hundred feet,
Or sways on the shuddering shoulder of a long bough.
Before him, the dark gullies of unfathomable streams;
Behind, the silent hollows of the lonely hills.
Twigs and tendrils are his rocking-chairs,
On rungs of rotting wood he trips
Up perilous places; sometimes, leap after leap,
Like lightning flits through the woods.
Sometimes he saunters with a sad, forsaken air;
Then suddenly peeps round,
Beaming with satisfaction. Up he springs,
Leaps and prances, whoops, and scampers on his way.
Up cliffs he scrambles, up pointed rocks,
Dances on shale that shifts or twigs that snap,
Suddenly swerves and lightly passes. . . .
Oh, what tongue could unravel
The tale of all his tricks?

Alas, one trait
With the human tribe he shares; their sweet's his sweet,
Their bitter is his bitter. Off sugar from the vat
Or brewer's dregs he loves to sup.
So men put wine where he will pass.
How he races to the bowl,
How nimbly licks and swills!
Now he staggers, feels dazed and foolish,
Darkness falls upon his eyes. . . .
He sleeps and knows no more.
Up steal the trappers, catch him by the mane,
Then to a string or ribbon tie him, lead him home;
Tether him in the stable or lock him into the yard;
Where faces all day long
Gaze, gape, gasp at him and will not go away.

The Bones of Chuang Tzu[1]

By Chang Hēng (A.D. 78-139)

I, CHANG P'ING-TZU, had traversed the Nine Wilds
and seen their wonders,
In the eight continents beheld the ways of Man,
The Sun's procession, the orbit of the Stars,
The surging of the dragon, the soaring of the phœnix in
his flight.
In the red desert to the south I sweltered,
And northward waded through the wintry burghs of Yu.
Through the Valley of Darkness to the west I wandered,
And eastward travelled to the Sun's extreme abode,
The stooping Mulberry Tree.

So the seasons sped; weak autumn languished,
A small wind woke the cold.

And now with rearing of rein-horse,
Plunging of the tracer, round I fetched
My high-roofed chariot to westward.
Along the dykes we loitered, past many meadows,
And far away among the dunes and hills.
Suddenly I looked and by the roadside
I saw a man's bones lying in the squelchy earth,
Black rime-frost over him; and I in sorrow spoke
And asked him, saying, "Dead man, how was it?
Fled you with your friend from famine and for the last
grains
Gambled and lost? Was this earth your tomb,
Or did floods carry you from afar? Were you mighty,
were you wise,
Were you foolish and poor? A warrior, or a girl?"
Then a wonder came; for out of the silence a voice—
Thin echo only, in no substance was the Spirit seen—

[1] The great Taoist philosopher, whose works have been translated by Professor Giles.

Mysteriously answered, saying, "I was a man of Sung,
Of the clan of Chuang! Chou was my name.
Beyond the climes of common thought
My reason soared, yet could I not save myself;
For at the last, when the long charter of my years was told,
I too, for all my magic, by age was brought
To the Black Hill of Death.
Wherefore, O Master, do you question me?"
Then I answered:
"Let me plead for you upon the Five Hill-tops,
Let me pray for you to the Gods of Heaven and the Gods
of Earth,
That your white bones may arise,
And your limbs be joined anew.
The God of the North shall give me back your ears;
I will scour the Southland for your eyes;
From the sunrise will I wrest your feet;
The West shall yield your heart.
I will set each several organ on its throne;
Each subtle sense will I restore.
Would you not have it so?"
The dead man answered me:
"O Friend, how strange and unacceptable your words!
In death I rest and am at peace; in life I toiled and strove.
Is the hardness of the winter stream
Better than the melting of spring?
All pride that the body knew,
Was it not lighter than dust?
What Ch'ao and Hsü despised,
What Po-ch'eng fled,
Shall I desire, whom death
Already has hidden in the Eternal Way—
Where Li Chu cannot see me
Nor Tzŭ Yeh hear me,
Where neither Yao nor Shun can praise me
Nor the tyrants Chieh and Hsin condemn me,
Nor wolf nor tiger harm me,

Lance prick me nor sword wound me?
Of the Primal Spirit is my substance; I am a wave
In the river of Darkness and Light.
The Maker of All Things is my Father and Mother,
Heaven is my bed and earth my cushion,
The thunder and lightning are my drum and fan,
The sun and moon my candle and my torch,
The Milky Way my moat, the stars my jewels.
With Nature am I conjoined;
I have no passion, no desire.
Wash me and I shall be no whiter,
Foul me and I shall yet be clean.
I come not, yet am here;
Hasten not, yet am swift."
The voice stopped, there was silence.
A ghostly light
Faded and expired.
I gazed upon the dead, stared in sorrow and compassion.
Then I called upon my servant that was with me
To tie his silken scarf about those bones
And wrap them in a cloak of sombre dust;
While I, as offering to the soul of this dead man,
Poured my hot tears upon the margin of the road.

The Dancers of Huai-Nan

By Chang Hēng
(*A Fragment*)

I saw them dancing at Huai-nan and made this poem of praise:

THE instruments of music are made ready,
Strong wine is in our cups;
Flute-songs flutter and a din of magic drums.
Sound scatters like foam, surges free as a flood. . . .

And now when the drinkers were all drunken
And the sun had fallen to the west,
Up rose the fair ones to the dance,
Well painted and apparelled,
In veils of soft gossamer
All wound and meshed;
And ribbons they unravelled,
And scarfs to bind about their heads.
The wielder of the little stick
Whispers them to their places, and the steady drums
Draw them through the mazes of the dance.
They have raised their long sleeves, they have covered
their eyes;
Slowly their shrill voices
Swell the steady song.
And the song said:
As a frightened bird whose love
Has wandered away from the nest,
I flutter my desolate wings.
For the wind blows back to my home,
And I long for my father's house.

Subtly from slender hips they swing,
Swaying, slanting delicately up and down.
And like the crimson mallow's flower
Glows their beauty, shedding flames afar.
They lift languid glances,
Peep distrustfully, till of a sudden
Ablaze with liquid light
Their soft eyes kindle. So dance to dance
Endlessly they weave, break off and dance again.
Now flutter their cuffs like a great bird in flight,
Now toss their long white sleeves like whirling snow.
So the hours go by, till now at last
The powder has blown from their cheeks, the black from
their brows,
Flustered now are the fair faces, pins of pearl

Torn away, tangled the black tresses.
With combs they catch and gather in
The straying locks, put on the gossamer gown
That trailing winds about them, and in unison
Of body, song and dress, obedient
Each shadows each, as they glide softly to and fro.

Hot Cake

By Shu Hsi (*c.* A.D. 281)

WINTER has come; fierce is the cold;
In the sharp morning air new-risen we meet.
Rheum freezes in the nose;
Frost hangs about the chin.
For hollow bellies, for chattering teeth and shivering knees
What better than hot cake?
Soft as the down of spring,
Whiter than autumn wool!
Dense and swift the steam
Rises, swells and spreads.
Fragrance flies through the air,
Is scattered far and wide,
Steals down along the wind and wets
The covetous mouth of passer-by.
Servants and grooms
Throw sidelong glances, munch the empty air.
They lick their lips who serve;
While lines of envious lackeys by the wall
Stand dryly swallowing.

New Corn

By T'ao Ch'ien (A.D. 365-427)

SWIFTLY the years, beyond recall.
Solemn the stillness of this fair morning.
I will clothe myself in spring-clothing
And visit the slopes of the Eastern Hill.
By the mountain-stream a mist hovers,
Hovers a moment, then scatters.
There comes a wind blowing from the south
That brushes the fields of new corn.

Plucking the Rushes

A Boy and Girl are sent to gather Rushes for Thatching

Anon. (4th cent.)

GREEN rushes with red shoots,
Long leaves bending to the wind—
You and I in the same boat
Plucking rushes at the Five Lakes.
We started at dawn from the orchid-island:
We rested under the elms till noon.
You and I plucking rushes
Had not plucked a handful when night came!

Wild Geese

By Shën Yo (A.D. 441-513)

WHERE bright waters flood the Spring shore
A journeying flock swerves with bended wing;
They sip the wavelets, tug the yielding weeds,
Their folded wings flaked with icy dew,

A-flock they sail, pushing the quiet stream,
Or singly each his own gleam pursues.
Now almost earthward they trail a dipping flight;
Now upward quavering tumbled legions rise.
Each rushing wing skims the rippled lake;
At one swoop they are gone to their native land.

Lo-Yang

By the Emperor Ch'ien Wēn-ti (6th cent.)

A BEAUTIFUL place is the town of Lo-yang:
The big streets are full of spring light.
The lads go driving out with harps in their hands:
The mulberry girls go out to the fields with their baskets.
Golden whips glint at the horse's flank,
Gauze sleeves brush the green boughs.
Racing dawn, the carriages come home,—
And the girls with their high baskets full of fruit.

To Tan Ch'iu, the Hermit

By Li Po (a.d. 701-762)

MY friend is lodging high in the Eastern Range,
Dearly loving the beauty of valleys and hills.
At green Spring he lies in the empty woods,
And is still asleep when the sun shines on high.
A pine-tree wind dusts his sleeves and coat;
A pebbly stream cleans his heart and ears.
I envy you, who far from strife and talk
Are high-propped on a pillow of blue cloud.

Clearing at Dawn

By Li Po

THE fields are chill, the sparse rain has stopped;
The colours of Spring teem on every side.
With leaping fish the blue pond is full;
With singing thrushes the green boughs droop.
The flowers of the field have dabbled their powdered cheeks;
The mountain grasses are bent level at the waist.
By the bamboo stream the last fragment of cloud
Blown by the wind slowly scatters away.

Picnics

By Wang Wei (A.D. 699-759)

I

WHERE Yang the Scholar talks of Holy Writ
The Prince of Huai comes with cup in hand.
Late he drinks, till the birds falter in their song,
And fallen flowers heap the place where he sat.
Homeward we turn, the silver lamps are lit;
The forest floor is scattered with trinkets of jade.
The fortress-city sleeps behind solemn gates;
We pack its entries with a music of pipes and song.

II

ON scented furs softly the guests recline,
The palace wantons have spread their silken screen;
Flowers from the rivulet dull their painted cheeks,
The mountain moon dims the candle's light.
Black at the window are heaped the ridges of the hill;
The curtained doors are cold with the fountain's spray.
At last we go—and carry with us in our train
Ballad and dance, lest the way seem dull and long.

Stone Fish Lake

By Yüan Chieh (A.D. 723-772)

I LOVED you dearly, Stone Fish Lake,
With your rock-island like a swimming fish!
On the fish's back is the Wine-cup Hollow,
And round the fish,—the flowing waters of the Lake.
The boys on the shore sent little wooden ships,
Each made to carry a single cup of wine.
The island-drinkers emptied the liquor-boats
And set their sails and sent them back for more.
On the shores of the Lake were jutting slabs of rock
And under the rocks there flowed an icy stream.
Heated with wine, to rinse our mouths and hands
In those cold waters was a joy beyond compare!

Of gold and jewels I have not any need;
For Caps and Coaches I do not care at all.
But I wish I could sit on the rocky banks of the Lake
For ever and ever staring at the Stone Fish.

Passing T'ien-Mēn Street in Ch'ang-an and seeing a Distant View of Chung-nan[1] *Mountain*

By Po Chü-i (A.D. 772-846)

THE snow has gone from Chung-nan, spring is almost come.
Lovely in the distance its blue colours against the brown of the streets.
A thousand coaches, ten thousand horsemen pass down the Nine Roads;
Turns his head and looks at the mountains,—not one man!

[1] Part of the great Nan Shan Range, fifteen miles south of Ch'ang-an.

Planting Flowers on the Eastern Embankment

By Po Chü-i

Written when Governor of Chung-Chou

I TOOK money and bought flowering trees
And planted them out on the bank to the east of the Keep.
I simply bought whatever had most blooms,
Not caring whether peach, apricot, or plum.
A hundred fruits, all mixed up together;
A thousand branches, flowering in due rotation.
Each has its season coming early or late;
But to all alike the fertile soil is kind.
The red flowers hang like a heavy mist;
The white flowers gleam like a fall of snow.
The wandering bees cannot bear to leave them;
The sweet birds also come there to roost.
In front there flows an ever-running stream;
Beneath there is built a little flat terrace.
Sometimes I sweep the flagstones of the terrace;
Sometimes, in the wind, I raise my cup and drink.
The flower-branches screen my head from the sun;
The flower-buds fall down into my lap.
Alone drinking, alone singing my songs,
I do not notice that the moon is level with the steps.
The people of Pa do not care for flowers;
All the spring no one has come to look.
But their Governor-General, alone with his cup of wine,
Sits till evening and will not move from the place!

Dreaming that I went with Li and Yü to visit Yüan Chēn

By Po Chü-i

Written in Exile

AT night I dreamt I was back in Ch'ang-an;
I saw again the faces of old friends.
And in my dreams, under an April sky,
They led me by the hand to wander in the spring winds.
Together we came to the village of Peace and Quiet;
We stopped our horses at the gate of Yüan Chēn.
Yüan Chēn was sitting all alone;
When he saw me coming, a smile came to his face.
He pointed back at the flowers in the western court;
Then opened wine in the northern summer-house.
He seemed to be saying that neither of us had changed;
He seemed to be regretting that joy will not stay;
That our souls had met only for a little while,
To part again with hardly time for greeting.
I woke up and thought him still at my side;
I put out my hand; there was nothing there at all.

The Cranes

By Po Chü-i (A.D. 830)

THE western wind has blown but a few days;
Yet the first leaf already flies from the bough.
On the drying paths I walk in my thin shoes;
In the first cold I have donned my quilted coat.
Through shallow ditches the floods are clearing away;
Through sparse bamboos trickles a slanting light.
In the early dusk, down an alley of green moss,
The garden-boy is leading the cranes home.

On His Baldness

BY PO CHÜ

(A.D. 832)

AT dawn I sighed to see my hairs fall;
At dusk I sighed to see my hairs fall.
For I dreaded the time when the last lock should go. . . .
They are all gone and I do not mind at all!
I have done with that cumbrous washing and getting dry;
My tiresome comb for ever is laid aside.
Best of all, when the weather is hot and wet,
To have no top-knot weighing down on one's head!
I put aside my dusty conical cap
And loose my collar-fringe.
In a silver jar I have stored a cold stream;
On my bald pate I trickle a ladleful.
Like one baptized with the Water of Buddha's Law,
I sit and receive this cool, cleansing joy.
Now I know why the priest who seeks Repose
Frees his heart by first shaving his head.

My Servant Wakes Me

By Po Chü-i (A.D. 839)

MY servant wakes me: "Master, it is broad day.
Rise from bed; I bring you bowl and comb.
Winter comes and the morning air is chill;
To-day your Honour must not venture abroad."
When I stay at home, no one comes to call;
What must I do with the long, idle hours?
Setting my chair where a faint sunshine falls
I have warmed wine and opened my poetry books.

Since I Lay Ill

By Po Chü-i (A.D. 840)

SINCE I lay ill, how long has passed?
Almost a hundred heavy-hanging days.
The maids have learnt to gather my medicine-herbs;
The dog no longer barks when the doctor comes.
The jars in my cellar are plastered deep with mould;
My singers' carpets are half crumbled to dust.
How can I bear, when the Earth renews her light,
To watch from a pillow the beauty of Spring unfold?

A Dream of Mountaineering

By Po Chü-i

Written when he was over Seventy

AT night, in my dream, I stoutly climbed a mountain,
Going out alone with my staff of holly-wood.
A thousand crags, a hundred hundred valleys—
In my dream-journey none were unexplored.
And all the while my feet never grew tired
And my step was as strong as in my young days.
Can it be that when the mind travels backward
The body also returns to its old state?
And can it be, as between body and soul,
That the body may languish, while the soul is still strong?
Soul and body—both are vanities:
Dreaming and waking—both alike unreal.
In the day my feet are palsied and tottering;
In the night my steps go striding over the hills.
As day and night are divided in equal parts—
Between the two, I get as much as I lose.

Resignation

By Po Chü-i

KEEP off your thoughts from things that are past and done;
For thinking of the past wakes regret and pain.
Keep off your thoughts from thinking what will happen;
To think of the future fills one with dismay.
Better by day to sit like a sack in your chair;
Better by night to lie like a stone in your bed.
When food comes, then open your mouth;
When sleep comes, then close your eyes.

The Pitcher

By Yüan Chēn (A.D. 779-831)

I DREAMT I climbed to a high, high plain;
And on the plain I found a deep well.
My throat was dry with climbing and I longed to drink,
And my eyes were eager to look into the cool shaft.
I walked round it, I looked right down;
I saw my image mirrored on the face of the pool.
An earthen pitcher was sinking into the black depths;
There was no rope to pull it to the well-head.
I was strangely troubled lest the pitcher should be lost,
And started wildly running to look for help.
From village to village I scoured that high plain;
The men were gone; the dogs leapt at my throat.
I came back and walked weeping round the well;
Faster and faster the blinding tears flowed—
Till my own sobbing suddenly woke me up;
My room was silent, no one in the house stirred;

The flame of my candle flickered with a green smoke;
The tears I had shed glittered in the candle-light.
A bell sounded; I knew it was the midnight-chime;
I sat up in bed and tried to arrange my thoughts:
The plain in my dream was the graveyard at Ch'ang-an,
Those hundred acres of untilled land.
The soil heavy and the mounds heaped high;
And the dead below them laid in deep troughs.
Deep are the troughs, yet sometimes dead men
Find their way to the world above the grave.
And to-night my love who died long ago
Came into my dreams as the pitcher sunk in the well.
That was why the tears suddenly streamed from my eyes,
Streamed from my eyes and fell on the collar of my dress.

The South

By Wang Chien (*c.* a.d. 750-835)

IN the southern land many birds sing;
Of towns and cities half are unwalled.
The country markets are thronged by wild tribes;
The mountain-villages bear river-names.
Poisonous mists rise from the damp sands;
Strange fires gleam through the night-rain.
And none passes but the lonely fisher of pearls
Year by year on his way to the South Sea.

Immeasurable Pain

By Li Hou-chu, last Emperor of the Southern T'ang Dynasty (deposed in a.d. 975)

IMMEASURABLE pain!
My dreaming soul last night was king again.
As in past days
I wandered through the Palace of Delight,
And in my dream
Down grassy garden-ways
Glided my chariot smoother than a summer stream;
There was moonlight,
The trees were blossoming,
And a faint wind softened the air of night,
For it was Spring.

The Cicada

By Ou-yang Hsiu

In the summer of the first year of Chia-yu (a.d. 1056) *there was a great flood. By order of the Emperor, I went to the Wine Spring Temple to pray for fine weather, when I heard a cicada singing. Upon which subject I wrote this poem:*

HUSHED was the courtyard of the temple;
Solemn stood I, gazing
At the bright roofs and gables,
The glorious summits of that towering shrine.
Untroubled were my thoughts, intently prayed
My fasting soul, for every wandering sense
Was gathered to its home.
Unmoved I watched the motions of the world,

Saw deep into the nature of ten thousand things.
Suddenly the rain was over, no wind stirred
The morning-calm; round all the sky
Was cloudless blue, and the last thunder rolled.
Then we, to strew sweet-scented herbs upon the floor,
Drew near the coloured cloister, by whose side
Some old trees grew amid the grass
Of the deserted court. Here was a thing that cried
Upon a tree-top, sucking the shrill wind
To wail it back in a long whistling note—
That clasping in its arms
A tapering twig perpetually sighed,
Now shrill as flute, now soft as mandolin;
Sometimes a piercing cry
Choked at its very uttering, sometimes a cold tune
Dwindled to silence, then suddenly flowed again,
A single note, wandering in strange keys,
An air, yet fraught
With undertone of secret harmony.
"What creature can this be?" "Cicada is its name."
"Are you not he, cicada,
Of whom I have heard told you can transform
Your body, magically moulding it
To new estate? Are you not he who, born
Upon the dung-heap, coveted the sky,
The clean and open air;
Found wings to mount the wind, yet skyward sailing
Upon a leafy tree-top checked your flight,
Pleased with its trim retreat? Are you not he
Who with the dew for drink, the wind for food,
Grows never old nor languid; who with looped locks
Frames womanish beauty?
Long since have I marvelled
How of ten thousand creatures there is not one
But has its tune; how, as each season takes its turn,
A hundred new birds sing, each weather wakes
A hundred insects from their sleep.

Now lisp the mango-birds
Like pretty children, prattling at their play.
As shuttle at the sounding loom
The tireless cricket creaks. Beautiful the flexions
Of tongue and trilling throat, how valiantly
They spend themselves to do it!
And even the croakers of the pond,
When they get rain to fill
Their miry, parching puddles, while they sip
New rivulets and browse the soppy earth,
Sing through the live-long night. And like enough
May frogs be passionate; but oh, what seeks
The silent worm in song?[1]
These and a thousand others, little and great,
Too many to name them all,
Myriads of creatures—each after its own shape and kin,
Hold at their season ceaseless tournament of song;
But swiftly, swiftly
Their days run out, time transmutes them, and there is
silence,
Desert-silence where they sang.

Alas! philosophy has taught
That the transcending mind in its strange, level world
Sees not kinds, contraries, classes or degrees.
And if of living things
Man once seemed best, what has he but a knack
Of facile speech, what but a plausible scheme
Of signs and ciphers that perpetuate
His thoughts and phrases? And on these expends
His brooding wits, consumes his vital breath;
One droning out the extremity of his woe,
Another to the wide world publishing

[1] All through the winter and spring the worm lives underground. On the first night of summer it issues and, in the thrill of its second birth, begins to sing in a shrill, woman's voice. It sings all night, and then is silent again for ever.

His nobleness of heart!
Thus, though he shares
The brief span of all creatures, yet his song
A hundred ages echoes after him.
But you, cicada,
What know you of this? Only for yourself
You make your music. . . ."
So was I pondering, comparing,
Setting difference by difference, gain by gain,
When suddenly the clouds came back and overhead
The storm blazed and crashed, spilling huge drops
Out of the rumbling sky. . . .
And silent now
Was the cicada's voice.

The Herd-Boy

By Lu Yu (A.D. 1135-1209)

IN the southern village the boy who minds the ox
With his naked feet stands on the ox's back.
Through the hole in his coat the river wind blows;
Through his broken hat the mountain rain pours.
On the long dyke he seemed to be far away;
In the narrow lane suddenly we were face to face.
The boy is home and the ox is back in its stall;
And a dark smoke oozes through the thatched roof.

Boating in Autumn

AWAY and away I sail in my light boat;
My heart leaps with a great gust of joy.
Through the leafless branches I see the temple in the wood;
Over the dwindling stream the stone bridge towers.
Down the grassy lanes sheep and oxen pass;
In the misty village cranes and magpies cry.
Back in my home I drink a cup of wine
And need not fear the greed[1] of the evening wind.

[1] Which "eats" men.

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